

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9564

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, BE

SUBJECT: NEW STRIKE IN THE LIMBOURG-CAMPINE COAL FIELDS

1. IN RECENT WEEKS THE GENRALLY QUIET BELGIAN LABOR SCENE HAS BEEN MARKED BY TROUBLES OVER REDUCTIONS IN FORCE BY ACEC-WESTINGHOUSE (REPORTED SEPARATELY) AND BY A WILD-CAT STRIKE IN THE COALFIELDS OF LIMBOURG PROVINCE. THE MINERS STRIKE BEGAN JANUARY 7 AND HAS INVOLVED ABOUT 900 MINERS. THE STRIKE LEADERS OPPOSE THE NEWLY-APPROVED CONTRACT NEGOTIATED BY THE MAJOR CHRISTIAN AND SOCIALIST TRADE UNIONS THAT GIVES MINERS A 7.8 PERCENT WAGE HIKE FOR 1974. STRIKE LEADERS WANT 15 PERCENT WHICH, WITH INDEXATION, COULD BRING A FULL 23 PERCENT INCREASE BY THE END OF THE YEAR.

2. THE CAMPINE STRIKE IS LED BY THREE SPLINTER GROUPS, INCLUDING THE "AMICALE DE ZWARTBERG", BACKED BY EXTREME LEFT WING STUDEN*S, NOTABLY THE AMADA -- "ALL POWER TO THE WORKERS" BROUP, AND BY VOLKSUNIE SENATOR GERARD SLEEGERS. THE REAL OBJECTIVE IS TO DISCREDIT AND OUTBID THE NEW CHRISTIAN MINWORKERS' UNION PRESIDENT JEF OOMS AND TO WEAKEN THE CHRISTIAN AND SOCIALIST TRADE UNION ORGANIZATIONS. THE STRIKE LEADERS ARE EXPECTED TO TRY TO PROMOTE SYMPATHY ACTIONS IN THE MINES OF THE NEIGHBORING LIEGE PROVINCE, AND TO TRY TO PROLONG THE STRIKE ACTION AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.

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3. THE RADICAL GROUPS BEHIND THE STRIKE HAVE WORKED WITH LITTLE SUCCESS OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS IN SEEKING TO PRESS THEIR DEMANDS ELSEWHERE AMONG BELGIAN WORKERS. STRIKES THEY HELPED INITIATE IN THE CAMPINE IN 1966 (OPPOSING THE CLOSING DOWN OF A COCKERELL-UGREE MINE) AND 1970 RESULTED IN TWO DEATHS IN THE FIRST INSTANCE AND, IN THE SECOND, LABOR UNREST THAT CONTINUED FOR OVER A YEAR IN THE CAMPINE AREA. STRAUSZ-HUPE

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Message Attributes

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